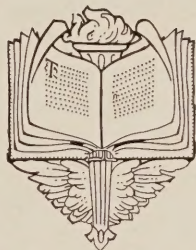


Pam
India

Buddha or Christ ?

The Story of an Unprecedented
Missionary Opportunity



American Baptist Foreign Mission Society

Ford Building, Ashburton Place

Boston, Mass.

A MACEDONIAN CALL FROM KENG TUNG

MORE than fifteen thousand converts have been baptized on the Kengtung field in Burma and across the border in China during the past fourteen years. Missionaries report that the field is ripe for one of the great ingatherings in missionary history. Shall we plan adequately to meet it? New missionaries are needed, and an expenditure of \$25,000, for the next five years, with which to provide new buildings, train native leaders and properly develop the work. Kengtung and the district across the Chinese border is destined to experience one of the great movements to Christianity in the history of modern missions.

The story published in this pamphlet and the illustrations are based on reports and photographs furnished by missionary William M. Young, who has spent twenty-five years of service in Burma.

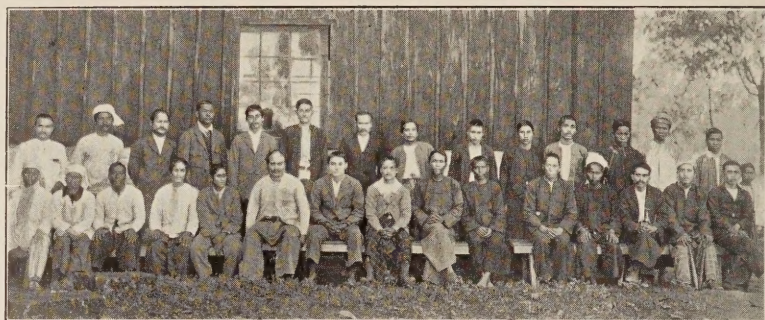
BUDDHA OR CHRIST ?



AN UNUSUAL TRADITION

"The foreigner will bring us knowledge of the true God." This is the tradition of the Lahu and Wa tribes on the Kengtung field and across the border of China. This feeling on the part of the natives is a family tradition and greatly facilitates the work of any Christian workers entering this field. Thousands of unshepherded converts there await Christian organization and leadership. With this expectant frame of mind the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society is offered one of the greatest opportunities ever faced by a missionary organization. The work in this section of China is an outgrowth of the Kengtung field, but it is impossible from that station to give pastoral oversight to the multitudes across the border. Two strong central stations with outstations are needed immediately.

Kengtung, the extreme northeast station in Burma, and 350 miles from the railroad, was opened in 1901 to extend the work among the Shans who constitute more than half of the population. Across the border in China is a fine field for work among the Shans. In the region of Mong Se, northeast from Kengtung, where it is hoped to have a strong outstation, there are indications that the Shans will be more easily reached with the Gospel than on any field in Burma. The people are open-minded and realize that Buddhism has no hope to give them. At Mong Mong where the central station will be located the population is dense but the territory is small; and to the northwest lies one of the largest Shan fields in that part of China. Up to the present time, however, the work of the mission has been most successful with the Lahu and Wa tribes.



Native Workers in Attendance at the Central Association at Kengtung



Christian School and Pupils at Kengtung

THE LAHU SEEK THE TRUE GOD

The Lahu are closely related to the Karens in manners, customs, language and traditions. In them the Karens recognize their brethren of the North Country whom they have long wished to see. On the other hand the Lahu had a tradition that their brothers who had gone to the South Land would return with the knowledge of the true God. As the workers among the Lahu have been largely Karens they feel that this tradition has been fulfilled. Both Karens and Lahu entertain the conviction about the coming of the foreigner. The Lahu conception of God is clear and spiritual, the Lahu word for "God" corresponding closely with the term "heavenly Father" as we understand it. Some of their traditions seem to point back to the incarnation of our Lord. One is, "God dwelt among men; He ascended on high; He is coming again." Another is, "A holy man of old dwelt among us. Because of the opposition of the Shans and Chinese to his teaching he ascended on high. Before his ascension he gave promise that the foreigner would come with knowledge of the true God."

Their rites of burning incense are similar to those recorded in the Old Testament. "We will burn candles and incense until the foreigner comes with the true law," they say; "and we will exchange the candles and incense for the white book or the true law." According to Lahu tradition the Lord will return to the earth at Awng Lawng Mountain, five days' journey northwest of Kengtung. These traditions show providential leading in preparing the way for us, by placing the Lahu under our Board where the Karens can act as Christian workers among them.

In the beginning of the Lahu movement Namhsihpang village, near the Chinese border, was entirely given over to evil spirit worship and drunkenness. A year later most of the people were baptized by Rev. Mg. Bu. The transformation of that village is complete; they have a most devoted church; they pledge one tenth of their income to the Lord's work; and many of the members are intensely interested in evangelistic work. The



An Association Meeting with 1,200 Delegates in Attendance



A Group of Native Workers attending the Kengtung Central Association

village has an uncommonly large number of aged people, many of whom live more in the heavenly world than do most Christians. Said one old man:

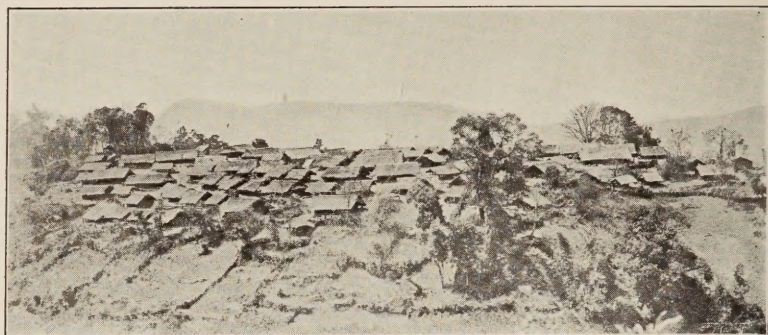
"I have eleven children and thirty grandchildren. Thank God they are all Christians to-day. I am too old to work now, but while the younger people are in the fields I pray five times each day for them."

In Burma there are about 70,000 Lahu. The population in China is much more dense than on the Burma side. Farther north the people are of finer physique, live in larger villages, and cling more steadfastly to their traditions. That the missionary spirit is strong among them is proved by the fact that eighty per cent of the Wa on the China side have been led to give up head-hunting and accept the Lahu traditions and belief in one God. These Wa are known as the Kaishin Wa; that is, Wa with the changed heart. *Together Lahu and Kaishin Wa await the coming of the foreigner with the true law.*

READY TO ACCEPT CHRISTIANITY

The Wa are a sturdy, industrious people who give promise of making strong, earnest Christians. In school at Kengtung the Wa boys are independent and work harder to support themselves than the Lahu boys. Moreover, a larger per cent of these boys are looking forward to religious work. They make the best teachers and preachers. The Wa, who are naturally of an independent spirit, are somewhat harder to deal with than the Lahu; but the Kaishin Wa will accept Christianity readily, and even the head-hunting Wa will not be difficult to reach, as Wa Christians can work among them in safety. At least 3,500 Wa have already been baptized, and thousands more await baptism.

In Kengtung State there are 30,000 Wa, mostly Buddhists. The main Wa population is found farther north in British territory and in China. Compared with the Lahu, the Wa live in



The Village of WanRai, where 200 Converts were Baptized



The 200 Converts who were Baptized at One Time at the Village of
WanRai

smaller, more densely populated districts. There are many large villages where we may have churches of from 200 to 600 members. Tens of thousands of Wa and Lahu in this section are ready for the Gospel. Kentung touches only the borders of these people; we must enter into China and garner for Christ in this great field which is now white for the harvest.

An example of the power of the Gospel in the individual life is the experience of Ainan, a Buddhist Wa priest. He was an opium victim and later joined a robber band, engaging in many raids across the border. At the time of the Lahu movement in Kengtung he came to the mission, broke away from the opium habit after a ten days' struggle, and became a sincere Christian. As a Gospel preacher he has shown remarkable power, having won at least 500 souls for Christ in his evangelistic work. He speaks fluently the four most important languages on the Kengtung field. The church over which he has been pastor for nine years has a membership of 175, and is most efficient along all lines of Christian activities.

THOUSANDS BAPTIZED

In 1905 three men came across the border from China to visit friends in Kengtung. At the mission they heard the Gospel, accepted it, and were baptized. Following the instructions of the Master, one man returned to tell his own people and those of neighboring villages how great things the Lord had done for him. Six months later this man returned to the mission saying, "Eight villages in my section believe on the Lord Jesus, and observe the Christian Sabbath. Can you send some one to baptize them?" Rev. Mg. Bu was sent and baptized about 700, many in the locality where this man had borne his testimony. To-day there are in that section 1,200 of the most earnest of our Christians in China.

Of the 16,000 persons baptized on the Kengtung field, at least 7,000 are across the Chinese border. Except for a small section about Mong Lem, they have been for three years without



A Group of Wa Christians gathered to greet the Arrival of Missionary William M. Young



The First Representatives from China who requested the Missionary to bring the Gospel across the Border

pastoral care, as the native workers were driven out by local Chinese officials. Recent rulings by the Chinese Government and by the Government of Burma make it certain that the work cannot be carried on by Kengtung Station. The American Consul General at Canton has emphatically stated that no concessions for lands or buildings can be secured without a resident missionary on the field. With such a missionary on the field, we can insist on our requests being granted. Moreover, the British Government in Burma refuses to allow any Christian worker to enter China without a passport, and declines to make application for passports until the concessions for land are granted. As all our helpers from Lower Burma are British subjects, it becomes absolutely necessary to open the work in China with resident missionaries. For nearly fifteen years constant calls have come to us to establish a Central Station at Mong Lem, 100 miles due north from Kengtung, and another at Mong Mong, 100 miles north from Mong Lem.

FIELD FOR EDUCATIONAL WORK

The educational work of this northern field, especially at Mong Lem and at Mong Mong, is vitally important. A good central school at Mong Mong would in all probability have 500 pupils in a very short time. These would be almost entirely members of Christian families. In the near future we shall need 300 to 500 self-supporting, native workers trained on the field. It is also imperative that medical work be carried on by the Mission.

The Wa village of Angkak, two days' journey from Mong Mong, where we hope to open the new station in China, was, like most villages in that section, given over to evil spirit worship and drunkenness. The food supply is scarce in that district, and, as fully half the grain was used for liquor, the people were compelled to go long distances to purchase rice at high prices. In 1915, under the leadership of Rev. Shwethu and Rev. Daniel, 450 persons were baptized. A wonderful transformation of



The Buddhist Monastery at Mong Mong, where a New Station should be established



The First Converts on the Kengtung Field, Father and Daughter, who are still earnest Christian Workers

Angkak followed; all liquor was banished, and the people had rice to sell. A year later no traces of evil spirit worship could be seen. A thousand Christians of the district welcomed a visiting missionary with these words: "If we have any custom not in harmony with Christian teaching, point it out and we will discard it. You teach us the way; we are ready to follow."

The reflex influence of this new work in the north will be of untold value on the Kengtung field. For example, the Lahu Akha in China will doubtless receive the Gospel eagerly and in large numbers. This will have a most wholesome effect upon the 33,000 Lahu Akha in Kengtung, comparatively few of whom have been baptized, and who are very much given to drink and corrupt social practices. In the near future workers from China can be provided for these people. Most of the Lahu in Burma came originally as small colonies from the larger populations in China, and a large ingathering from the parent villages would wonderfully stimulate work for the Lahu on the Kengtung field. The conversion of many thousands of Wa in China and in British territory in the north cannot fail to have a profound influence upon the 30,000 Wa in Kengtung. Although the latter are largely Buddhists, they have been far more accessible than have most of the Buddhists in Burma. The establishment of this new branch of the work in the north will give a new impetus to the work throughout all the Shan states.

OUR OPPORTUNITY

We have already noticed the bonds of sympathy between the Lahu and the Karens of Lower Burma. These bonds were strengthened by the belief that the tradition had been fulfilled when the Karens returned in large numbers to Kengtung as Christian workers. The offers of assistance received from these native Christians of Lower Burma have been most impressive. Men have offered to leave good positions to go north if this new field were opened. Money has been given liberally for this advance work in China. Can we do less than follow their ex-



Schoolgirls from across the Border who are appealing for a Christian Education



Missionary William M. Young and Group of Chinese Officials across the Border

ample? The opening of this new work will greatly increase the liberality and deepen the missionary spirit among the Karen churches in Burma.

Thousands of willing converts eagerly awaiting organization and leadership have been assured that the work will be undertaken on a scale adequate for all their needs. If we fail to keep our word these people will lose faith in the Christianity we preach. If we fail to send true leaders they will follow the false. Already the Buddhists are trying hard to win them. Shall they be taught to follow the "blight of Asia" or the "Light of the world," — Buddha or Christ?

FOR additional literature or other information regarding the work of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, write to any of the following:

The District Secretary of your district.

Department of Missionary Education, 23 East 26th Street,
New York City.

Literature Department, Box 41, Boston, Mass.

For information regarding any form of gift write to J. Y. Aitchison,
Home Secretary, Box 41, Boston, Mass.

172-5000-5-8-1919